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ICE AND GRAPE FRUIT CULTURE *in Louisiana*



H. E. VAN DEMAN

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Orange and grape fruit culture in Louisi



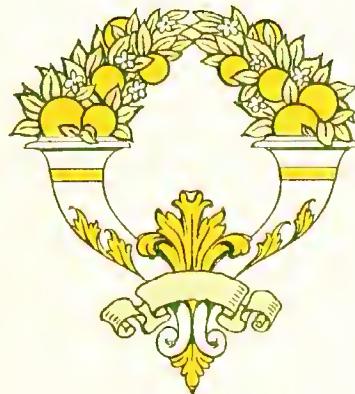
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GATHERING THE ORANGE CROP

ORANGE AND GRAPE FRUIT CULTURE IN LOUISIANA

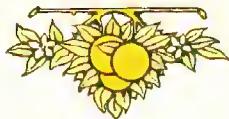


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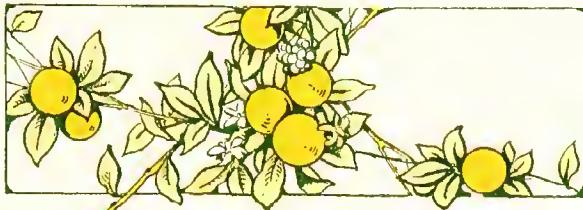
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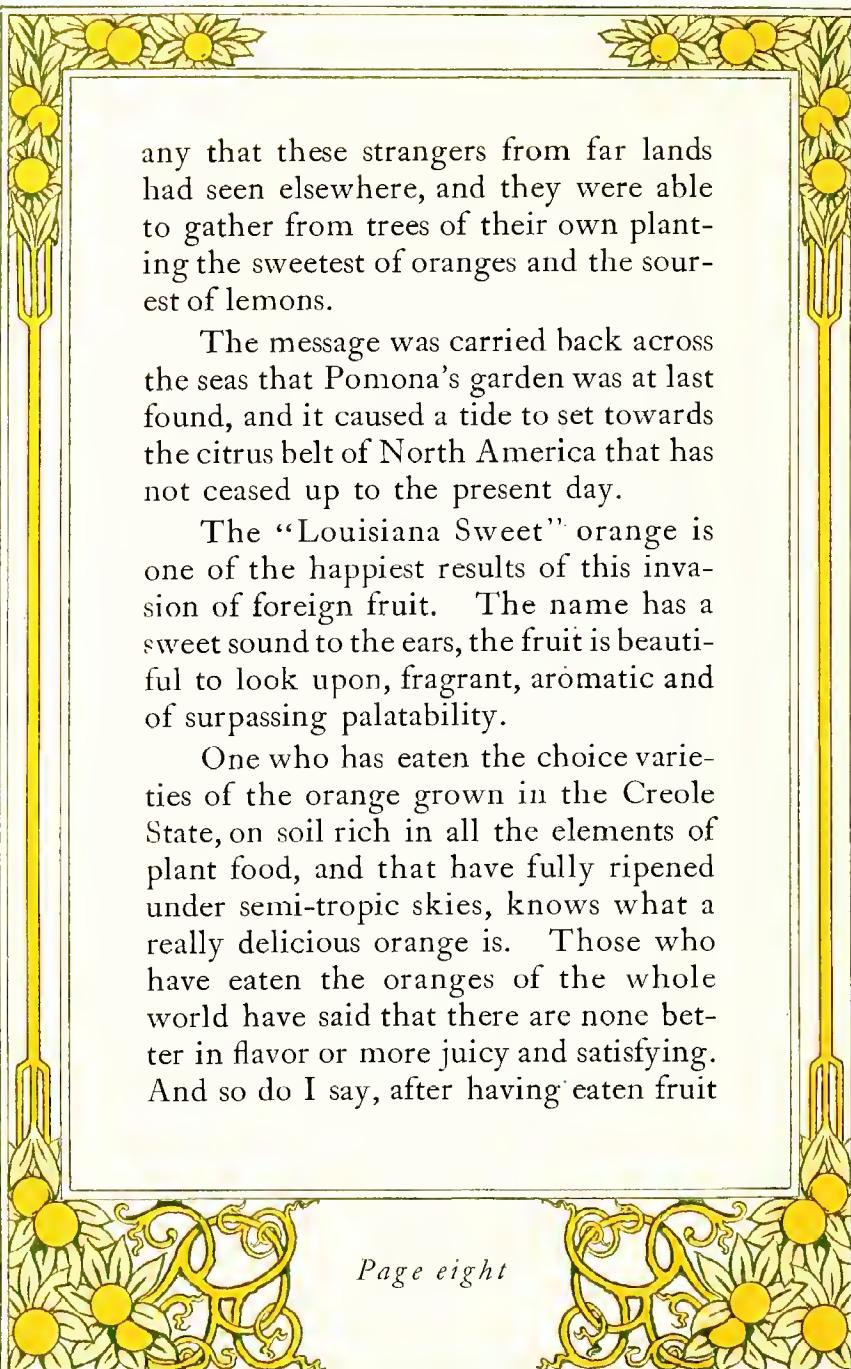
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WHEN the pioneers of civilization invaded the Western Hemisphere, they brought with them from the Old World the fruits that had been grown at the homes of their forefathers.

All along the southern border of North America there were planted the orange and other citrus fruits from sunny Italy, Spain, Southern France and the Orient, for until that time none of them were grown in this part of the world, either in a wild state or cultivated by man.

Of the favorable spots where these fruits were planted Louisiana was among the first. The young trees grew up thriftily in the rich, alluvial soil of the delta of the great Father of Waters, and soon bore fruit that was equal to



any that these strangers from far lands had seen elsewhere, and they were able to gather from trees of their own planting the sweetest of oranges and the sour-est of lemons.

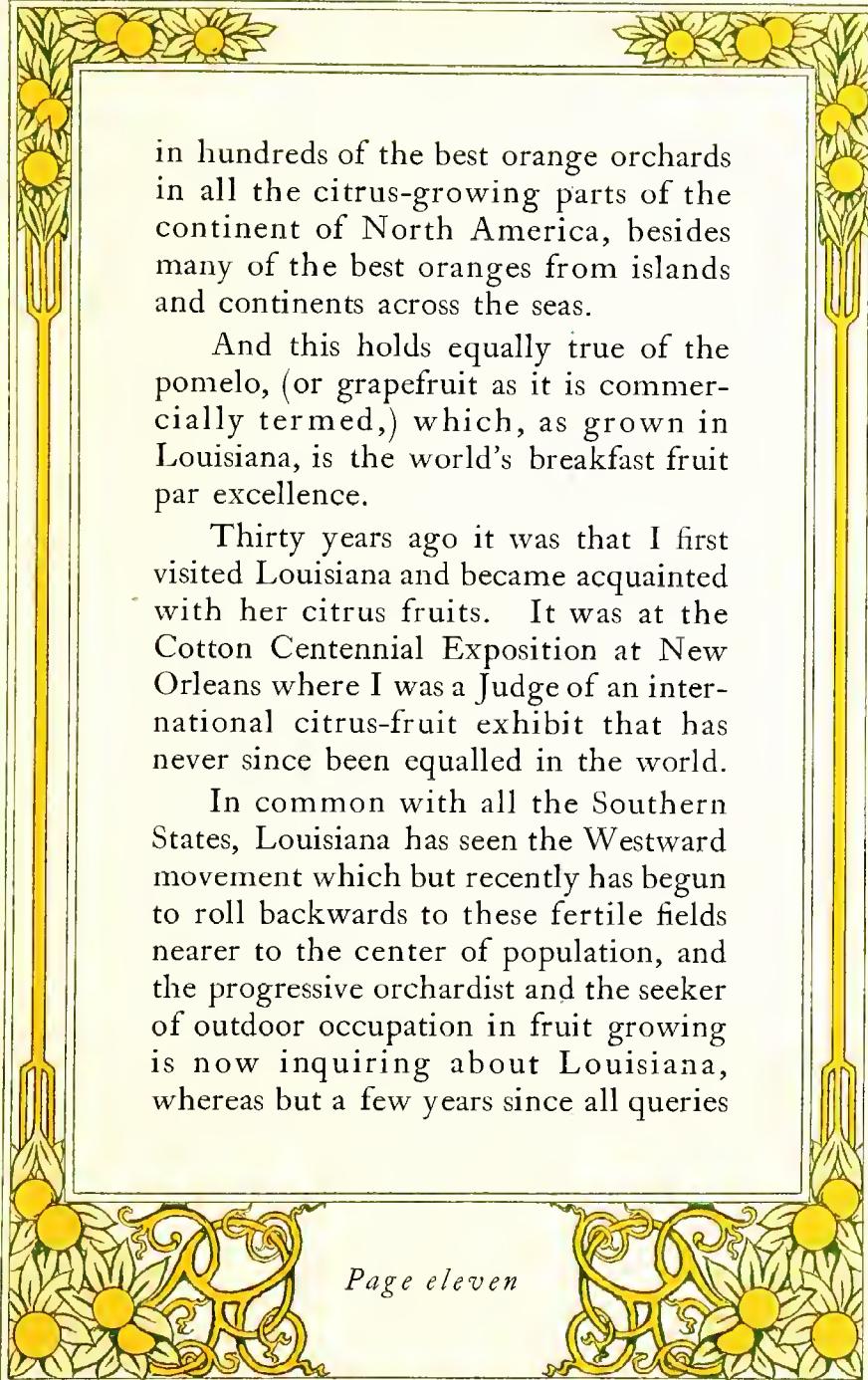
The message was carried back across the seas that Pomona's garden was at last found, and it caused a tide to set towards the citrus belt of North America that has not ceased up to the present day.

The "Louisiana Sweet" orange is one of the happiest results of this inva-sion of foreign fruit. The name has a sweet sound to the ears, the fruit is beau-tiful to look upon, fragrant, aromatic and of surpassing palatability.

One who has eaten the choice varie-ties of the orange grown in the Creole State, on soil rich in all the elements of plant food, and that have fully ripened under semi-tropic skies, knows what a really delicious orange is. Those who have eaten the oranges of the whole world have said that there are none bet-ter in flavor or more juicy and satisfying. And so do I say, after having eaten fruit



O N T H E E D G E O F T H E O R A N G E G R O V E



in hundreds of the best orange orchards in all the citrus-growing parts of the continent of North America, besides many of the best oranges from islands and continents across the seas.

And this holds equally true of the pomelo, (or grapefruit as it is commercially termed,) which, as grown in Louisiana, is the world's breakfast fruit par excellence.

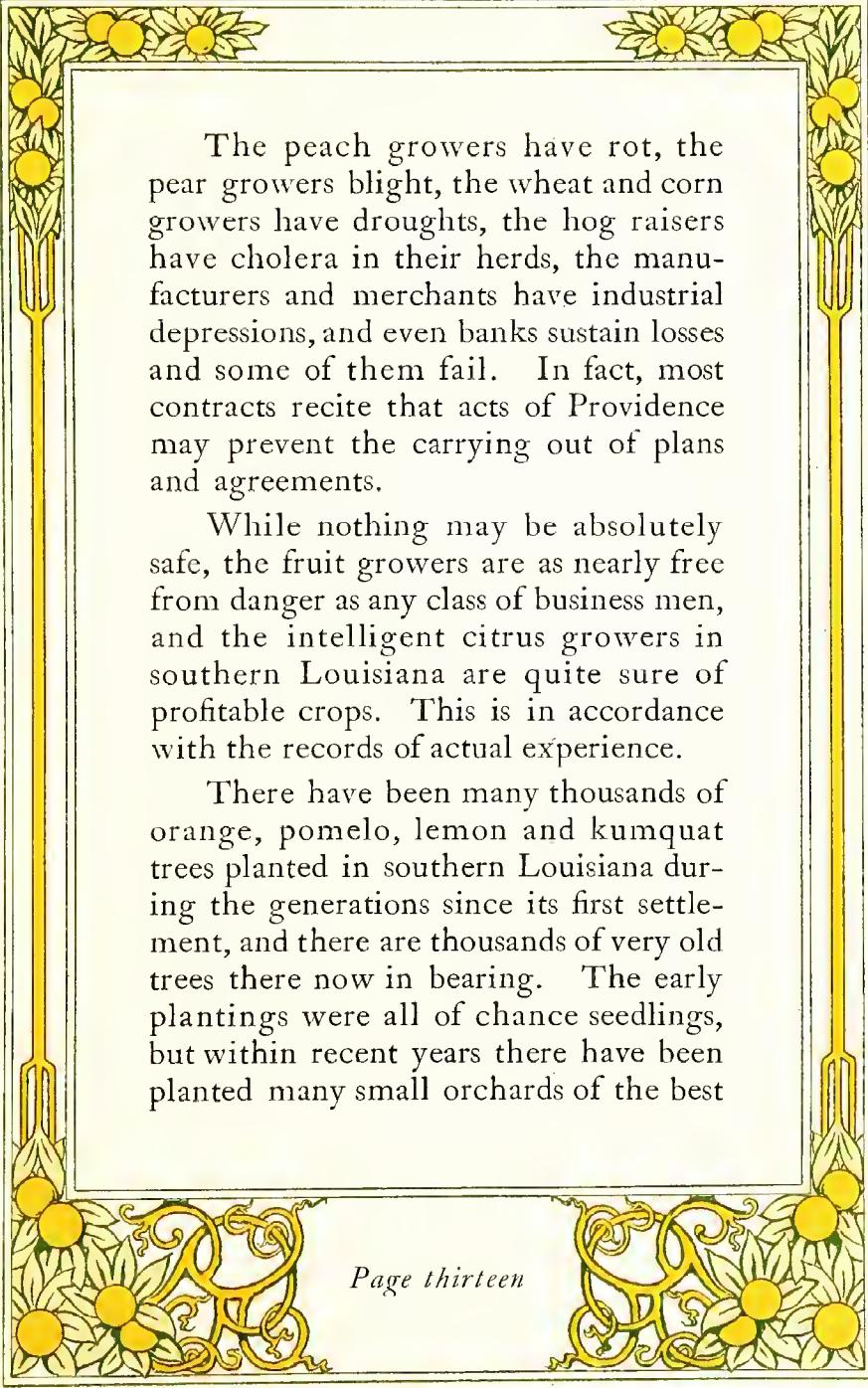
Thirty years ago it was that I first visited Louisiana and became acquainted with her citrus fruits. It was at the Cotton Centennial Exposition at New Orleans where I was a Judge of an international citrus-fruit exhibit that has never since been equalled in the world.

In common with all the Southern States, Louisiana has seen the Westward movement which but recently has begun to roll backwards to these fertile fields nearer to the center of population, and the progressive orchardist and the seeker of outdoor occupation in fruit growing is now inquiring about Louisiana, whereas but a few years since all queries

were about the West as the favored fruit zone.

None of the citrus fruits flourish very far from the Gulf coast because of the danger elsewhere of the cold spells that unexpectedly occur at rare intervals. Any climate may be said to be as mild as its coldest spells. While there will be years without any damaging frosts, there may be unusual times of cold. This we all know to be true of the famous citrus-growing regions of Florida and California, where on rare occasions vast quantities of fruit have been destroyed and the trees damaged or even killed outright in unprotected orchards. And it is true of the Mediterranean region as well. Even Cuba is not immune from frost.

It might be the first thought of those without knowledge or experience that there is nothing safe or sure about growing citrus fruits, and why grow them at all. The same might be said of every industry, for they all have their accidents and periods of distress.



The peach growers have rot, the pear growers blight, the wheat and corn growers have droughts, the hog raisers have cholera in their herds, the manufacturers and merchants have industrial depressions, and even banks sustain losses and some of them fail. In fact, most contracts recite that acts of Providence may prevent the carrying out of plans and agreements.

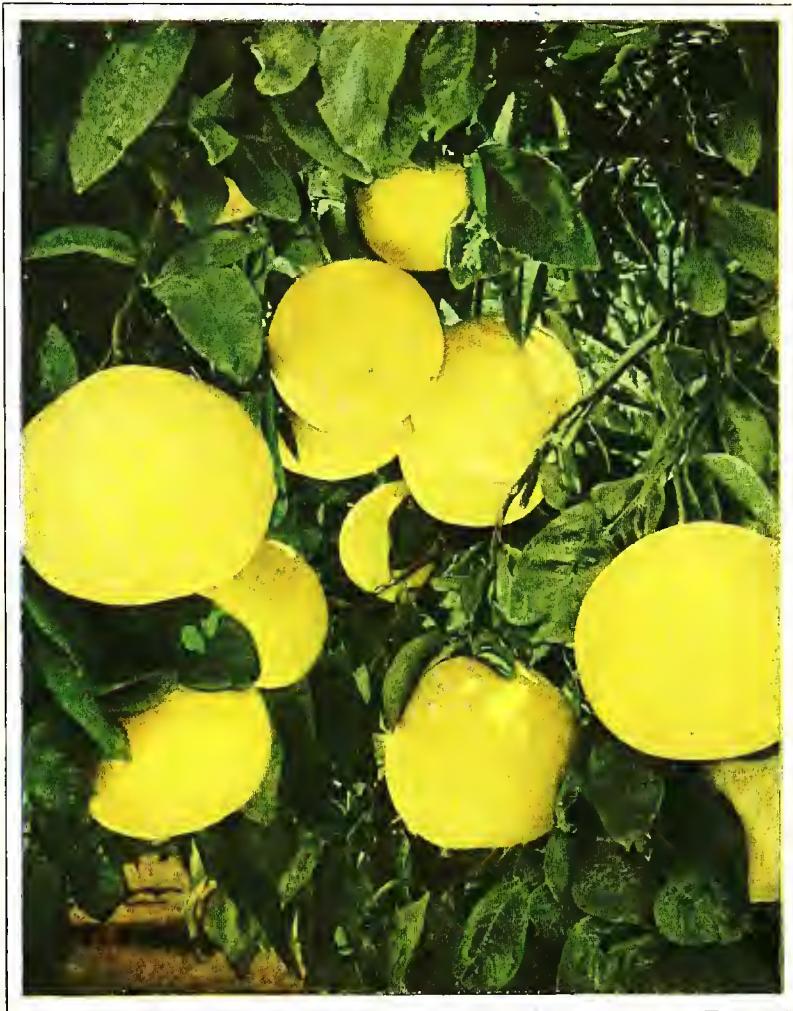
While nothing may be absolutely safe, the fruit growers are as nearly free from danger as any class of business men, and the intelligent citrus growers in southern Louisiana are quite sure of profitable crops. This is in accordance with the records of actual experience.

There have been many thousands of orange, pomelo, lemon and kumquat trees planted in southern Louisiana during the generations since its first settlement, and there are thousands of very old trees there now in bearing. The early plantings were all of chance seedlings, but within recent years there have been planted many small orchards of the best

varieties known. It is from these choice varieties mainly that the fame of the "Louisiana Sweet" has gone out, which is only a local class name that represents the good quality of Louisiana oranges properly grown.

Just a few weeks since, I had the privilege of visiting one of the modern citrus orchards of the delta region near New Orleans, and I was delighted at the example of horticultural and commercial success I found.

There were about sixty acres in all, but mostly of oranges of the ordinary varieties without name but of choice quality. There were trees of the Hart's Late, Jaffa, Washington Navel, that were loaded with the best of fruit. The Mandarins excelled anything that I had seen before in any part of the country. The Pome洛 trees, of which there were several acres, were loaded with fruit that equaled in size, color and flavor that of Florida, which is generally considered the highest type grown.



L U S C I O U S G R A P E F R U I T

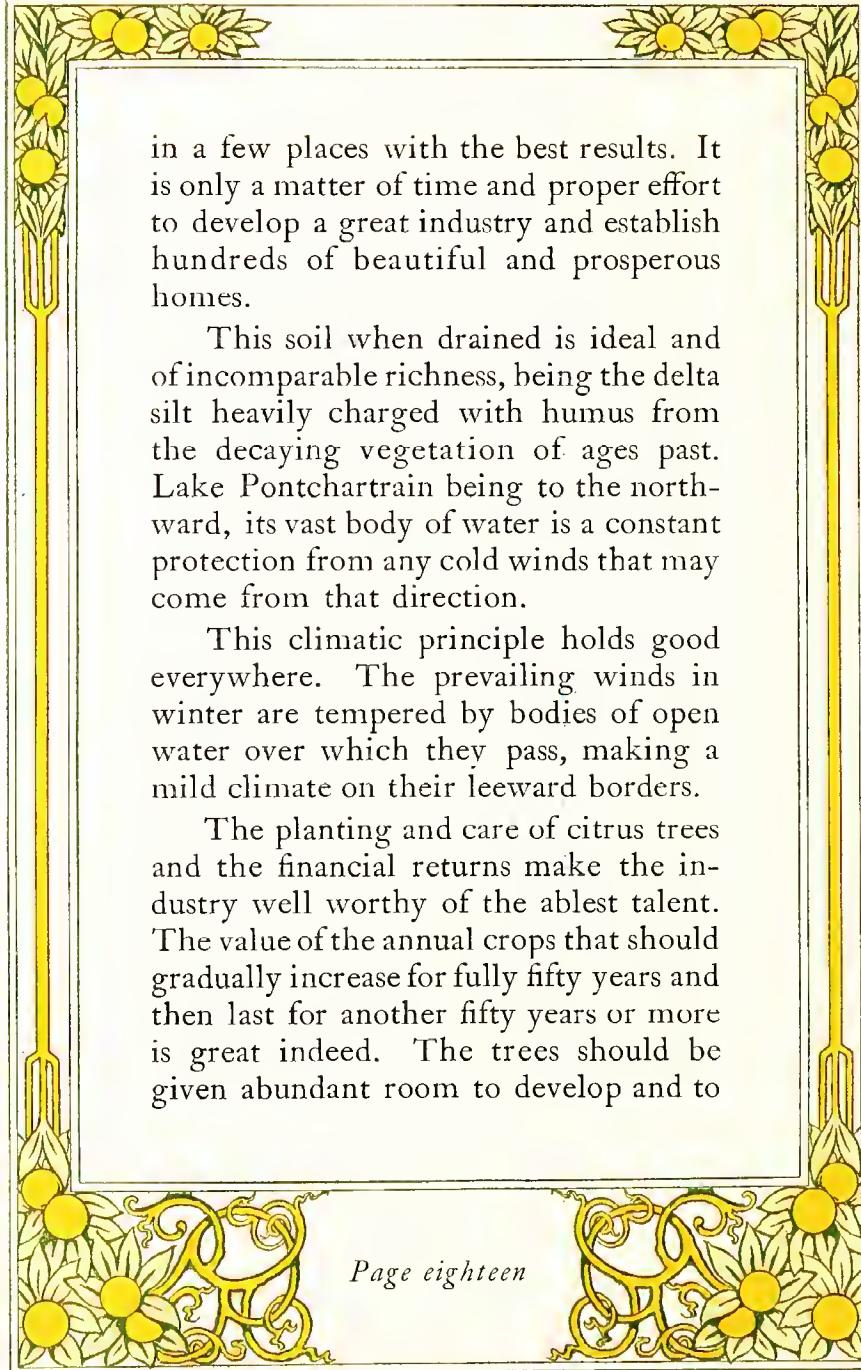
The few Kumquat trees that had been planted were bending under the weight of fruit. A very few lemon trees, planted merely for variety, also had an abundance of fruit.

I was told by a newspaper acquaintance that \$3,000 per acre had been refused for the grove, which unquestionably yields its owner very large profits.

It is not a question of being able to produce oranges, pomelos and other citrus fruits, but whether or not the trees will be planted and properly cared for.

As to where suitable land may be found for citrus planting, the answer is not difficult. One large area that is suitable to this use lies on both sides of the Mississippi River below New Orleans, and it is there that the older planting has been mainly done, but there are good locations north of the city and westward.

Along the southern shore of Lake Pontchartrain, there is excellent land for citrus trees. Most of it requires draining and this has been done to some extent



in a few places with the best results. It is only a matter of time and proper effort to develop a great industry and establish hundreds of beautiful and prosperous homes.

This soil when drained is ideal and of incomparable richness, being the delta silt heavily charged with humus from the decaying vegetation of ages past. Lake Pontchartrain being to the northward, its vast body of water is a constant protection from any cold winds that may come from that direction.

This climatic principle holds good everywhere. The prevailing winds in winter are tempered by bodies of open water over which they pass, making a mild climate on their leeward borders.

The planting and care of citrus trees and the financial returns make the industry well worthy of the ablest talent. The value of the annual crops that should gradually increase for fully fifty years and then last for another fifty years or more is great indeed. The trees should be given abundant room to develop and to

allow the sun to vitalize the leaves and ripen the fruit. They should not be planted nearer than 25 feet apart, and even then must be thinned out in the course of twenty-five years.

There are no mysteries or insurmountable difficulties to be met in growing citrus fruits successfully. That it requires knowledge and skill there is no doubt, but the results will justify any effort that is put forth.

“All the year round the orange groves are in blossom.” *Evangeline.*

Longfellow’s words about southern Louisiana still hold good and, to this day, the traveler’s eyes are gladdened by the smiling rows of fragrant blossomed and golden fruited trees.

The delightful climate and rich soil are conducive to the growth of many delicious fruits besides those of the genus citrus, as well as a multitude of sweet flowers that bloom throughout the whole year, while majestic and graceful palms flourish with almost no care. It is above all a place for beautiful homes and a



